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101718Z Nov 04

UNCLAS LAGOS 002274

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/W
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STATE FOR INR/AA
STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
STATE PASS DOC PHUEPER
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MISSION FEEDBACK ON WAGP PROJECT

1. (U) Mission was contacted by OPIC this week to provide comments regarding environmental, worker health, and safety implications for the proposed West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP) project in Nigeria. Mission is pleased to have the opportunity to provide these comments. However, Mission does not believe it is possible to provide detailed feedback before the pending OPIC Board Meeting on 11 November. Post is supportive of the project's goals, which include stimulation of the private sector through reliable power transmission, and progress on environmental goals, through a reduction in gas flaring and increased use of gas in place of less ecologically-sound alternatives.

2. (SBU) Post is aware that a full environmental impact study on the project was carried out. Nonetheless, OPIC should be aware that in a recent Nigerian press account, the non-governmental organization, Environmental Rights Action (ERA) has alleged potential negative impacts from the WAGP project, including destruction of farmland, adjacent villages, mangroves, and barrier beaches to clear access the pipeline route. The press article or additional follow-on action by ERA could create a degree of negative public sentiment towards the project. Mission will conduct discussions with project sponsors and local stakeholders regarding environmental/social issues relevant to WAGP. We anticipate carrying out these meetings by the end of November, and issuing a Mission statement on the WAGP project soon thereafter.

3. (U) This message was cleared by Embassy Abuja.

BROWNE